

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NEW TESTAMENT
HISTORIC EVIDENCE.

BY

S. P. TREGELLES, LL.D.

600091547W



600091547W

THE HISTORIC EVIDENCE

OF THE

AUTHORSHIP AND TRANSMISSION

OF

The Books of the New Testament.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Plymouth Young Men's Christian Association,

OCTOBER 14TH, 1851.

BY

S. P. TREGELLES, LL.D.

"— Ita ut interrogati, cujus quisque liber sit, non hæsitemus, quid respondere debeamus."—*Augustinus, contra Faustum*, l. 33.



SECOND EDITION.

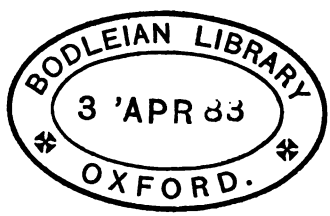
LONDON:

SAMUEL BAGSTER AND SONS,

15, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCLXXXI.

101. i. 659.



LONDON
WERTHEIMER, LEA & CO., PRINTERS,
CIRCUS PLACE, LONDON WALL.

CONTENTS.

	Page.
LECTURE	
Importance of the subject	1
PROCESS OF PROOF	4
St. Augustine's mode of investigation	5
Period of inquiry	7
NEW TESTAMENT AS A COLLECTIVE VOLUME . .	8
Testimony of Eusebius, 264—330	8
All our Books universally received, except James, 2 Peter, 2 & 3 John, Jude, and Revelation	9
Discrimination occasioned by the Diocletian Persecution .	10
Traditors	12
Books received in the time of Origen, 185—254 . . .	13
Canon in Muratori	15
Date of this Canon	17
New Testament Books in general use in the time of contemporaries of the Apostles.	19
ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES	21
Proofs in the 2nd century; Canon in Muratori, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian	22
Marcion	24
Tertullian's appeal	25

Page.

Testimony of Clement of Rome to 1 Corinthians, in 1st century 28
Authority of that Epistle indirectly shown 29
Clement's testimony to the Epistle to the Romans. . . 31
Polycarp's testimony to the Epistle to the Philippians . . 32
,, ,, to 1 Timothy, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians 32

THE FOUR GOSPELS 35

Regarded as known in the 2nd century. 34
Testimony of Irenæus 35
Not dependent on Papal authority. Irenæus and Victor . 36
Connection of Irenæus with the Apostolic age . . . 37
Justin Martyr's account of the Gospels as publicly read. . 39
Justin's Gospels not apocryphal writings 41
Untenable theory as to myths 43, 44
Proved facts not invalidated by lapse of time . . . 45
Testimony of John the Presbyter to Mark and Matthew . 47
Sentences in Polycarp, and Clement of Rome . . . 48
Connection of 1 Timothy v. 18, with Luke x. 7 . . . 49

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 50

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS 51

Early use 51
Authorship, not authority, in question 52
Pauline in a general sense 52

CATHOLIC EPISTLES. 1 PETER 53

1 JOHN 54

BOOKS OPPOSED BY SOME. EPISTLE OF JAMES . 54

Origen, Clement, Syriac Version 54, 55

2 PETER 56

Addressed to Cappadocia; testimony of Firmilianus . . 56
Passage in Clement of Rome 57

Page.

2 & 3 JOHN 58

EPISTLE OF JUDE 59

APOCALYPSE 59

Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Melito, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, and Hippolytus, as witnesses 59, 60
Counter statements of Caius and Dionysius . . . 60, 61
Apocalypse rejected through opposition to Millenarianism . 61

RESULTS OF EVIDENCE 62

Wide range of historic evidence 62, 63
No difficulty in tracing back as far as from Eusebius to St. Paul 63
St. Augustine's Canon fully met 63, 64
Acts of Paul and Thecla, and similar books, why rejected . 65
No counter evidence 66

EVIDENCE FROM THE CHANNELS OF TRANSMISSION 68

Testimony from corporate custody 69
Transmission by MSS. and Versions 71

CLAIMS OF ROME 72

Contradicted by the transmission of Scripture . . . 74
"The Church a Witness and Keeper of Holy Writ" . . 74

TRANSMISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO US. ENGLISH VERSIONS 75

Anglo-Saxon Versions 75
Wycliffe 76
Endeavours to suppress his Version 78
Tyndale 79
Coverdale 80
Accession of Queen Elizabeth (Nov. 17, 1558); free use of Scripture 81

vi

ROME
A
A
R
R
S
A

ROME
"
"
In
H

USES
As
As
D



It is thus, to those who really know the value of the gospel of Christ, that the subject before us is replete with interest; for such only can enter into the *true* value of the Scriptures, since they are not only their instructor in the truth of God, but also the title-deeds of their heavenly inheritance.

We may in a sense apply to this subject the words of St. Luke, in the introduction to his Gospel, "that thou mayest know the *certainty* of those things wherein thou hast been instructed;" for, thoroughly satisfied as we may be in our own minds of the full authority of the records of our religion, we cannot but feel that exact information as to the grounds of evidence has a peculiar value, when objections or difficulties are raised by any. Our own minds may be wholly unaffected by the objections brought forward,—we may be as sure as ever we were that Scripture is the word of God, and yet we must feel that it is at least unsatisfactory to have questions raised which we do not know how to answer; and this must be especially true in a case like the present, when the difficulties and objections may be so fully met, as to show that they arise either from the objector not being fully aware of the bearings of the subject, or else from a desire on his part to take advantage of the ignorance of others.

But there are also inquirers,—persons who really wish to know on what ground the Scriptures of the New Testament are received: now, if such inquirers

are candid, they certainly ought to be met:—such persons ought to be shown that it is not a mere prevalent *opinion* that Matthew and others bore testimony, in the books which bear their names, to the events of our Lord's life, death, and resurrection, but that we have the most simple and well-defined grounds of certainty that this is the unquestionable fact.

We ought to know what to answer, when asked why we receive as authoritative the Acts of the Apostles, and reject the Acts of Paul and Thecla;—why we own the Epistles of the New Testament, and reject the Epistles and Discourses attributed to St. Peter in the Clementine Homilies. The answer may be given as simply, clearly, and fully as if the question were, Why do you acknowledge the first and second parts of "The Pilgrim's Progress" to be written by John Bunyan, and reject the third part as a spurious addition?

I have now to endeavour to present before you such a statement of the evidence on the subject, as shall be both clear and ample: the details into which I must of necessity enter, require a certain measure of attention, of the same kind as is needed in pursuing any other line of proof, whether mathematical or moral.

PROCESS OF PROOF.

How, then, can we know satisfactorily to whom we ought to ascribe the authorship of ancient works?

How can we *prove* that any book was really written by the person whose name it bears? How can we, living at this time, inquire with all confidence into points of authorship which relate to a period eighteen hundred years ago? In other words, What is the process of proof which must be applied to this subject?

A very distinct statement of the mode of investigation is given by the Christian writer, St. Augustine, about the year 400. He lays down, plainly and unhesitatingly, that the authorship of Scripture must be investigated in just the same manner as we would inquire into that of secular writings. In the case of profane writers, he says, most truly, that it has often happened that works have been produced and attributed to their pens, which have afterwards been rightly rejected as spurious,—and why? Because such alleged writings possess no external evidence of their authenticity, not being mentioned by contemporary and immediately subsequent authors; and because they also, in their contents, present certain things which are not in accordance with the author to which they have been ascribed, or to his known writings, or to the time in which he lived. This is a plain discriminating canon of St. Augustine, for the rejection of supposititious writings.

But as to authentic works, we have simply to apply the converse of this canon. St. Augustine asks how we can then determine such and such works to be the genuine productions of Hippocrates. He replies,—

"Because a successional series of writers, from the time of Hippocrates and onward to the present day, have declared them to be such; so that to doubt would be to act the part of a madman. Whence (he continues) do men know as to the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Varro, and other such authors, what is really theirs, but by the same continued testimony of successive ages?"

This principle he then applies to the point, with which I would now connect it:—

"Many (he says) have written much on subjects relating to the Church, not indeed with canonical authority, but for purposes of aid or instruction. Whence does it stand as an admitted fact whose any work may be, unless it be by testimony from the author's time, and by the continued and wide-extended knowledge amongst those who come after, that these things have been transmitted to us, so that, when asked, we need not hesitate what we ought to answer?"

St. Augustine, in this passage, is addressing Faustus, the Manichæan, the first (it is said) who denied that the Gospels were really written by those whose names they bear. He then applies the argument to the controversy which he was at that very time carrying on with him.

"Why should I go back to things long past? Look at these very letters which we hold in our hands; and

if some while after we shall be dead, any should deny those to be Faustus's, or these to be mine, whence will he be convinced, except through those who now know these things, transmitting, by continued succession, their acquaintance with the facts to posterity?"—(*Contrà Faustum*, l. 33.)

Now, these principles are of the utmost importance with regard to historic proof; for, although it might be objected that St. Augustine concedes too much to his opponent, in laying down that a genuine work ought *of necessity* to possess such successive testimonies, and although we know that many writings are received without doubt or hesitation, although the absolute evidence is but small in itself, yet this is certain, that no work can be spurious which is authenticated by such evidence as that which St. Augustine has described.

Thus, if in the ages which immediately follow that in which a work is said to have been written, we have distinct statements from credible witnesses of its existence and authorship, we possess that definite historic ground on which we receive the best authenticated productions of antiquity.

The New Testament, we must remember, consists of a collection of books; the statement of evidence must, therefore, relate in part to the collection as such, and in part to the several portions of which it is composed.

The period of inquiry as to any work is, of course, limited to the ages immediately following that in which

the authors are said to have lived: we need not go below the fourth century as to the New Testament, for from that time our twenty-seven books have been all commonly received.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AS A COLLECTIVE VOLUME.

The first statement, then, to which I shall call your attention, is the list which Eusebius gives of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

This well-known ecclesiastical historian was born in Palestine about the year 264: in his history, written about the year 330, he thus mentions the Scriptures of the New Testament:—

"Now, this appears to be a suitable place to give a summary statement of the books of the New Testament, which I have already mentioned. In the first place, then, we must put the holy quaternion of the Gospels: these are followed by the Acts of the Apostles: then we must mention the Epistles of Paul: then we must place the acknowledged first Epistle of John, and, similarly, the admitted Epistle of Peter: after this may be placed, if it appear suitable, the Apocalypse of John; the various opinions about which we shall set forth in proper time. And these are amongst the books *universally owned* (Homologoumena). Now, of *opposed* books (Antilegomena), which are, however,

acknowledged similarly by the many, are reckoned the Epistle called that of James, and that of Jude, and the second of Peter, and those named the second and third of John, or of some other of the same name. Amongst *spurious* writings are reckoned the Acts of Paul, and the book called the Shepherd, and the Apocalypse of Peter, and also the Epistle of Barnabas, and what are called the Instructions of the Apostles; and also (as I said), if it appear suitable, the Apocalypse of John, which (as I said) some reject, but which others rank amongst the books universally received. And now some reckon amongst these the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which especially pleases those of the Hebrews who have received Christ. And these are all the books which are *opposed*. We have of necessity included these too in our catalogue, having distinguished the writings which, according to the accounts delivered by the Church, are true, genuine, and universally owned, and those others which, although known by many ecclesiastical writers, are not reckoned in the canon, but are opposed"—(l. iii. c. 25).

From this passage we learn, that in the time of Eusebius—the latter part of the third century and the beginning of the fourth—all the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were known and received by Christians in general,—that there was discrimination exercised as to *what* books ought to be included in the New Testament collection;—that several books

professedly apostolic were rejected, but that none were included in the collection which we do not now receive; and none of those which we receive were absolutely rejected, although, as to a few of the number, there was some difference of opinion.

Not long before Eusebius wrote his history, events had occurred which rendered it needful for the Church to discriminate accurately between its authoritative Scriptures and other books. The Diocletian persecution, which commenced in the year 303, was directed even more against the sacred books of the Christians than against their persons. The endeavour was made to exterminate the Christian Scriptures: had this effort succeeded, it was thought that the form of belief which hindered the disciples of Christ from uniting in the popular idolatries, would at once fall to the ground. Such an effort had been made by Antiochus Epiphanes to destroy the Old Testament, and thus to annihilate Judaism. However foolish such an attempt may sound, there are facts which show that such an endeavour to destroy a book may be successful. A century after the invention of printing, an Italian book, on "The Benefits which we receive by the Death of Christ," had passed through many editions, and was possessed (it is said) by almost every intelligent family in that peninsula. The question of heresy was raised, —the free grace of the gospel of Christ was found to be set forth in this widely-circulated volume, and its

destruction was decreed. The machinery of the confessional was set in motion;—all were required to surrender their copies; and thus the work disappeared so thoroughly, that its contents were only known from the accounts of contemporary writers. Ranke, in his "History of the Popes," says, that this book was as much lost as the lost Decades of Livy. I may observe, that this volume, after a disappearance of three hundred years, has again been discovered in an English version, from which it has been re-translated into Italian, and printed, and is again employed as an instrument in the endeavours now carried on for introducing the light of the gospel of Christ into that land. That the present efforts to spread the gospel of Christ in that country, the seat of Romish power and idolatry, may be blessed in spite of the existing persecutions, far more widely than was the case at the time of the Reformation, must be the earnest desire and prayer of all who prize the gospel of Jesus Christ, and value the possession of God's holy word.

In the Diocletian persecution, the Christians throughout the Roman empire, from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, from the cataracts of the Nile to Britain, were required to give up their copies of the New Testament to be destroyed: those who refused, suffered imprisonments, tortures, slavery, or death. Many refused to surrender the Scriptures, and endured the consequences; others complied with the order of the

emperors, and thence received, amongst Christians, the designation of *Traditors*, as though they had betrayed the word of God, just as Judas had betrayed our blessed Lord Himself. There were also some who allowed the emissaries of the government to take away any books which were *not* Scripture; some bishops placed books of the heathens, or of heretics, where the messengers of the magistrates were likely to search for copies of the Gospels. Indeed, not a few of those employed by the persecutors had but little zeal in the cause, so that (unlike the agents of the authorities in Italy, who are now so diligent in searching for copies of the Scriptures, and in arresting those who read them), they willingly took away whatever books were delivered to them, without inquiring whether they were the Christian Scriptures or not.

In consequence of this persecution, and the light in which the *Traditors* were regarded as subject to severe ecclesiastical discipline, it became really an anxious question, *What* are the sacred books of the Christians? Hence the need of discrimination on this point. Whoever gave up any of the books universally received, was a *Traditor*,—whoever gave up any of the books reckoned as spurious, was not subjected to any ecclesiastical discipline; but from the general feeling of the many (as stated in the passage quoted from Eusebius), any who gave up the books opposed by some, would be looked on with doubt, and by most would be con-

demned as *Traditors*. The importance of the question was felt as widely as was the diffusion of the Christian name.

The conclusion is manifest, that two centuries after the death of the Apostle John, all the books of the New Testament were known and used as *a collection;* that they were received as universally owned, with the exception of five of the shorter Epistles and the Apocalypse, of which some doubted.*

We may trace *backwards*, from Eusebius towards the days of the Apostles, so as to observe the notices which exist of the collected books of the New Testament.

In the former half of the third century, there was no Church teacher so conspicuous, as an author, as Origen. He was born at Alexandria, about the year 185, and he died A.D. 254, ten years before the birth of Eusebius. In his writings he makes such extensive use of the New Testament, that although a very large number of his works are lost, and many others have come down to us only in defective Latin versions, we can in his extant Greek writings alone (I speak this

* The fact of books of the New Testament being known and used as a collected volume, at the close of the third and beginning of the fourth century, is also evident from the manner in which Lactantius, at that period, speaks (Inst. l. iv. c. 20) of the New Testament as comprising that portion of holy Scripture which was written after the passion of our Lord.

from actual knowledge and examination) find cited at least two-thirds of the New Testament; so that, had such a thing been permitted as that the Gospels, and some of the other books, should have been lost, we might restore them in a great measure by means of the quotations in Origen.

Origen passed a considerable portion of his life in Palestine; he had also visited Rome, so that his testimony to the books of the New Testament cannot be considered as belonging merely to his native locality of Alexandria.

Eusebius (l. vi. c. 25) extracted from Origen's writings such passages as mention the uncontroverted books of the New Testament. In these passages he speaks of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as received by the whole Church which is under heaven. He mentions the Acts, as well as the Gospel, as the work of Luke. He speaks of the Epistles of St. Paul in a general manner (every one of which he cites in his writings). He mentions the Apocalypse as the work of the Apostle John, who wrote the Gospel and the first Epistle that bear his name. He speaks of the second and third Epistles of John as held to be doubtful by some; the first Epistle of Peter he calls universally owned; the second he speaks of as one about which there were doubts. In this sort of casual mention of the New Testament books, Origen does not speak of the Epistles of James

or Jude, both of which, however, he uses in his works. In other passages of Origen, which are only extant in the old Latin version (which is not worthy of *implicit* confidence), lists may be found of all the New Testament writings as we receive them.

I shall not now dwell on the manner in which Tertullian at Carthage, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, at the beginning of the third and close of the second century, speak of the New Testament:—I shall have occasion to refer to these important witnesses when speaking of particular parts of the collected volume of the Christian Scriptures.

The earliest notice of any *collected* books of the New Testament is found in a remarkable testimony of an unknown writer. The document to which I refer is commonly called the Canon in Muratori, because it was first published by that Italian scholar and antiquary, from a MS. in the Ambrosian library at Milan. This document is defective at the beginning, and throughout it is grievously disfigured by the gross errors of the copyist. The ignorance of the transcriber makes, however, the testimony not at all the less forcible. This canon, (as it is called from containing a list of our canonical books,) bears undoubted marks of being a translation, made from the Greek into Latin, by some one whose knowledge of the grammar and construction of the Latin language was very imperfect.

In the beginning the writer is speaking of the four

Gospels. That part which relates to St. Matthew and St. Mark is lost, except the concluding words: then St. Luke, the companion of the Apostle Paul, is mentioned as the author of the third Gospel, and St. John of the fourth; St. John's first Epistle is next mentioned; then the Acts of the Apostles as written by Luke; then all those Epistles of St. Paul are spoken of to which his name is prefixed; and then the Apocalypse of St. John: then the writer speaks of some spurious works which were rejected, and adds, "It is not fitting to mix gall with honey. The Epistle of Jude, and two of the above-mentioned John, are reckoned amongst the Catholic writings." In saying the two Epistles, the writer may have known of but one of St. John's shorter Epistles, or, as it appears probable to me, he may mean two *besides* the first Epistle of which he had spoken before. He then continues in a sentence which is not very comprehensible—"and Wisdom, written by the friends of Solomon in his honour." This stands in almost unintelligible obscurity;—*how* it can find a place amongst New Testament writings is difficult to be imagined; and also *what* book is intended is by no means clear,—whether the apocryphal book, or Proverbs, to which this name of Wisdom was appended in the second century,—a book the latter part of which was written out by "the men of Hezekiah," and of which some chapters are the words of Agur and of king Lemuel.

The writer thus concludes what he has to say of New Testament books,—"the Apocalypse, also, of John and Peter alone we receive, which [latter] indeed some amongst us do not choose to be read in the Church."—(*Routh's Reliquiæ Sacræ*, vol. i. p. 394.)

Thus, this ancient canon recognises the four Gospels, the Acts, thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, and, in short, all the New Testament books, except the Epistle to the Hebrews, that of James, those of Peter, and perhaps the second or third of John:—it speaks of no book, as belonging to the New Testament, which we reject, except the Apocalypse of Peter, and even that is mentioned doubtfully.

The author of this list of books speaks also of some which ought *not* to be received as of divine authority. He mentions "the Shepherd, written very recently in our own time, in the city of Rome, by Hermas, while Pius, his brother, was bishop of the see of Rome." This incidental remark supplies us with the date of the writer. Pius the first, bishop of Rome, died about the middle of the second century; he appears to have succeeded to the episcopate about the year 140. Thus, the list of New Testament books, which we have under consideration, cannot have been written at a much later period. And not only so, but as the writer speaks of the episcopate of Pius the first as being in his own days, his testimony reaches back as far, and probably farther. These were books known, and re-

ceived, and used as divine Scripture in the former half of the second century.

It is often remarkable, when pursuing an historical inquiry of a kind wholly different, how we meet with the strongest possible evidence against the claims of the Papacy. This writer, in speaking of authentic Scripture, rests on known historic facts, instead of cutting short the investigation by appealing at once to the infallible authority of *Pope* Pius the first. And further, he mentions the book which the brother of this same Pius had put forth during his episcopate: now, this book is still in being; and though many have treated it with most undeserved respect, imagining the author to be the Hermas whom St. Paul salutes in Rom. xvi., yet the absurdities, to use no stronger expression, with which it is replete, evince that it is no exposition of Christian truth. If, then, Hermas put it forth with the sanction of his brother, the bishop, it would show that the then Pope could authorise a work both unedifying and unorthodox; if, however, Hermas put forth his idle fancies *without* the authorisation of his brother, the bishop, what possibility is there that any Roman censorship then existed? How different were the claims of Rome in the days of Pius the first, from what we see in the days of Pius the ninth!

The existence of this Pius the first is a simple historical fact; the time, too, is known approximately; but in some of the lists of Popes he is numbered the

ninth, in some the tenth, and in others the eleventh! Some make him the predecessor, some the successor, of Anicetus. Had the certainty of papal succession and transmission been the basis of all continued Christianity, how uncomfortable would all these doubts and uncertainties make us! It is well that the facts of the transmission of the Scripture rest on a firm and certain basis, independent of all questions of papal succession.

We are thus able to trace back lists of New Testament books *almost* to the apostolic age: the author of the Canon in Muratori, from which I have been quoting, lived in the days of some who had been in part contemporaries of the Apostle John. We know from the natural course of events that this *must* have been the case. And we need not rely on deductions, however certain, for we know as a fact, that Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who had himself personally known St. John, laid down his life at a very advanced age as a martyr for Christ, about the year 168. Polycarp visited Rome, the place at which the author of this fragmentary list seems to have lived and written, after the middle of the second century—a visit memorable for the amicable contention between him and Anicetus, the Roman bishop, about the proper time for the celebration of Easter: each remained unconvinced by the other, and each left the other to the exercise of his

individual Christian liberty:—what a proof that the claims of infallibility and universal jurisdiction were as yet unknown!

We have thus proof that the New Testament books, in general, were in use as authoritative Scripture in the days of those who had lived in the apostolic age—that they were ascribed to the same writers to whom we attribute them, and that several of them were classed together as being, though not as yet *one* collected volume, yet at least in some measure a collection.

For ancient writings in general we ask no more distinct proof of genuineness: it is commonly regarded as quite sufficient, if a work is mentioned by one or more writers of the succeeding age, in such a way as to show that it was then known and used as the work of the author whose name it bears.

With regard to the New Testament books, however, we can go much farther with our proofs, when we consider, not the volume as a *collection*, but the distinct parts of which the volume is composed.

In the second century *two* collected portions of the New Testament were known and used by Christians, as read in their public assemblies; the one of these contained the Epistles of St. Paul, to which his name is prefixed, the other comprised the four Gospels as a *collected* volume. Besides these there were other writings used separately.

I will, therefore, first consider the evidence which relates to St. Paul's Epistles,—then that which bears on the authenticity of the Gospels,—then the other books must be considered separately: in this part of the subject a distinction must be made between those books of which Eusebius speaks as universally received, and those which he says were opposed by some.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES.

In the latter part of the second century we find testimony to the knowledge and use of thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, as certain and indubitable as we have that they are now known and used. The fact is alike admitted by friends and foes of Revelation, that the Church then had these Epistles, even as we now have them, and that they attributed them to that Apostle. Proofs of this will be given presently.

Now, the evidence by which letters are authenticated to future ages is often of a peculiar kind: a letter has not only a writer but also a party to whom it is addressed. If I wish to bring forward a letter as an evidence, it is often sufficient if I can show that such letter has been preserved in proper custody;—if the party to whom it professes to be addressed preserves it as genuine, this is a presumption of the strongest kind that it is so: the business of proving that it is *not* so rests with the opposite party.

Thus, those Epistles which are addressed to *Churches*

may be attested in a manner peculiarly strong, from the fact that such Churches preserved them and read them publicly and habitually.

The collection of St. Paul's Epistles is sufficiently shown by the manner in which they are mentioned in the Canon in Muratori;—that this reception of those documents was no private or local peculiarity is manifest from the fact that they were equally used in Alexandria, at Carthage, and in Gaul.

This is proved by the citations of Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Irenæus. This Clement, in the latter part of the second century, was the head of the catechetical school of Alexandria: he speaks of St. Paul's several Epistles by name, and cites them, with the single exception of the short epistle to Philemon; this too would doubtless have been mentioned had he anywhere given a *list* of the Epistles. He speaks of the Gospel collection under the name by which it was often designated, of *Evangelium*, and the collection of St. Paul's Epistles by the name of *Apostolos*, or Apostle, which was early appropriated to them: this name seems to have originated in the circumstance that the collection of Epistles then contained the writings of *one* Apostle.

Contemporary with Clement was Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, in Gaul: he gives as explicit a testimony as possibly could be borne to the same collection of Epistles; he mentions each of them, and cites them

as familiar writings, with the same exception of the short Epistle to Philemon.

Tertullian was a presbyter in the north of Africa: he used all the thirteen Epistles to which St. Paul's name was attached: of that to Philemon he speaks as distinctly as of the rest.

Now, the manner in which these early writers used these Epistles does not merely prove that they themselves knew them, and believed them to be genuine documents, but it does a great deal more, for it shows that Christians in general so received them at the time in question. These writers appeal to the Epistles as familiarly as a modern author or preacher would do; they habitually quote them, as though their authority were as much admitted by other Christians as by themselves.

Now, such a testimony as this carries us of necessity a long way farther back than the mere point of time at which these men *wrote;* it takes us at least to the earliest period of their knowledge as Christians. It shows that even then this collection of writings, bearing the name of the Apostle Paul, was in circulation amongst the Churches both in the East and the West. It shows that this must have been the case, at least in the former part of the second century; that is, in the days of the many who were then still living, who had belonged to the Church while it was still possessed of apostolic training.

The weight which the diversity of the locations of these writers gives to their evidence, can hardly be overestimated. We have not a trace of such a thing as one part of the Church knowing this collection, and another not possessing it. It was the common possession of the Christians, with which the teachers, and the communities which they taught, were alike acquainted.

And further, it was not the Christian community alone which was acquainted with the collected Epistles of the Apostle Paul. In the second century, one of the most remarkable separatists from the Church, Marcion of Pontus, formed out a religious system for himself: he considered that St. Paul only, fully understood the principles of *true* Christianity; and to his teaching he professed to adhere exclusively. Marcion's leading opinions were an entire rejection of the doctrine of the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God, and a rejection of the Old Testament, as something which was not from the true God. He used as authoritative Scripture one Gospel, which contained the narrative of St. Luke, with the omission of all that related to the birth, etc., of Christ, and a collection of St. Paul's Epistles, from which he excluded (as we learn from Tertullian) those to Timothy and Titus: he retained that to Philemon, so that Marcion's knowledge of this short Epistle is so far valuable as an early acknowledgment of its existence, and that it was owned to be St. Paul's. The time when Marcion began to

spread his peculiar opinions, from Pontus to Rome, was about the year 130; so that we have thus a further proof of St. Paul's Epistles having been collected and used in that form before that time.

I said, that the testimony which connects any particular document with a community to which it was addressed, possesses a peculiar force. In this point of view an appeal of Tertullian has no small value: by this allusion we learn, amongst other things, that St. Paul's Epistles were read in the second century, in the Christian assemblies, as authoritative Scripture.

He says:—"Come now, thou who desirest better to exercise thy curiosity in that which relates to thy salvation: go through the Apostolic Churches, in which the chairs of the Apostles preside in their places, in which their authentic letters are recited, resounding the voice and representing the face of each one. Is Achaia near thee? Thou hast Corinth. If thou art not far from Macedonia, thou hast Philippi, thou hast Thessalonica. If thou canst direct thy course into Asia, thou hast Ephesus. But if thou art near Italy, thou hast Rome, whence authority is ready at hand for us also [at Carthage, where he was writing; the authority is that of the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Romans]. How happy is that Church on which Apostles poured forth their whole doctrine with their blood; where Peter suffered in the same manner as his Lord; where

Paul was crowned with the death of John [the Baptist]; where the Apostle John, after he had been cast into the fiery oil and had suffered nothing, was banished to an island! Let us see what it learned, what it taught: it accords with the Churches of Africa also. It knows one God, the Creator of all things, and Christ Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, the Son of God the Creator, and it knows the resurrection of the flesh: it mingles the law and the prophets with the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles."—(*De Præs. Hær.* cap. 36.)

This last clause refers to the practice of reading equally in the Christian assemblies the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

It may now sound strange to hear Tertullian connecting what the Church of Rome had learned from the Apostles with that which it taught others:—*now* we see the sad and solemn contrast. St. Paul taught it the free grace of the gospel—justification through faith in the one sacrifice of Christ:—"if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Does Rome teach this *now?* It was to this Church that St. Paul addressed the warning to the Gentiles, who had been graffed into the good olive tree:—"if thou continue in his goodness,—otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Was there not a solemn prophecy veiled under this conditional threatening?

The testimony of Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Irenæus, connected as they all were with the apostolic age (especially Irenæus, as I shall have occasion to show), might suffice, as proving conclusively that, from the Apostles' days and onwards, these Epistles were used and read as St. Paul's,—that the Churches to which most of them were addressed owned them as such, and that their genuineness was a fact of common knowledge. In *opposition* to this, there is *no evidence* whatever; it is not, in fact, a *balance* of testimony, for all is on one side; if, then, anything be said in opposition, it is only surmise and conjecture: of what weight are they in comparison with proved facts?

If these Epistles were not genuine, *when* could the falsification have taken place? It could not have been later than the early years of the second century; and then we must suppose that either it was a common conspiracy of all Christians to give currency to false Epistles,—a conspiracy in which Italy, Gaul, North Africa, Asia, and Egypt, and further, the heretic Marcion, in part, combined,—or else that the whole sprung from the pen of daring forgers, who not only persuaded all Christian communities that these Epistles proceeded from the Apostle Paul, but who even succeeded in causing seven Churches to believe that they had received Epistles from St. Paul, which they never had received. Such are some of the difficulties which

must be grappled with when conjectural endeavours are made to set aside the force of clear evidence.

But we are able to carry our lines of evidence to some of these Epistles yet farther back.

In the first century of our era lived Clement of Rome: we possess one genuine Epistle which he addressed to the Church at Corinth. The Church of Rome ranks this Clement as the first of her Popes of that name; it is, however, unfortunate that some writers say he was the *second* Pope, others the third, others the fourth, and others the fifth,—so doubtful is the alleged papal succession at the very beginning.

But leaving the advocates of Rome to settle such knotty points, the fact is indisputable that in the first century Clement addressed the Corinthian Church thus:—

"Why then do we rend and tear in pieces the body of Christ, and raise seditions against our own body? . . . . . Your schism has perverted many; it has discouraged many; it has caused diffidence in many and grief in us all: and yet your sedition continues still. Take the Epistle of the blessed Paul the Apostle into your hands:—what did he first write to you in the beginning of the gospel? In truth he wrote to you by the Spirit concerning himself and Cephas and Apollos, because that even then ye had made party-divisions." —(*Ep. ad Cor.* cap. 47.)

Thus, in the first century, did one, whom after ages have designated as a Pope, write to a contentious Church; he used no anathematising threats; he even writes, not in his own name, but in that of "the Church that sojourneth at Rome;" and the authority that he wielded was the Scripture written by St. Paul. Would that Clement XI., who professed to be the successor of *this* Clement, had been actuated by a similar spirit, instead of fulminating direful anathemas against any who maintain that "the reading of holy Scripture is for all!"—(*Constitution* "*Unigenitus.*")

This Epistle of Clement seems to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem (see *Hefele*, p. xxxv.); at all events it was in the first century, and not more than from thirty to forty years after that of St. Paul to the Corinthian Church, so that not a few would, in the ordinary course of things, be still living at that place to whom the rebuke of the Apostle had been addressed.

Now, St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians was one of solemn reprehension, and yet that Church held it fast as genuine—a plain proof that it *knew* it to be such: the nature of the case, even if there were no other impossibilities, would preclude the thought of forgery. The Epistle was an evidence that condemned them, and yet they preserved it.

We find, too, from a letter of Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, to the Roman Church in the second century,

that the Corinthians publicly read also this Epistle of Clement; so that it, too, receives its attestation from those whose practical conduct it condemned.

It is not my object now to speak directly of the authority and inspiration of the New Testament books; this Epistle, however, attested as it is by strict lines of evidence of the strongest kind, as actually written by St. Paul to the Corinthian Church, may call for a passing notice from the peculiar nature of its contents. The writer speaks of the miraculous powers in the gift of tongues which he himself possessed; he mentions this as well known by those to whom he wrote; and their reception and preservation of the Epistle is a proof that such was the fact; as, endued with such powers, he claims such authority as to say, "If any man judge himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." He claims authority from God, which the Corinthians *knew* to be confirmed by miraculous powers. And further, he speaks of such powers as bestowed on some of the Corinthians themselves,—a plain proof of the reality of the whole statement: to imagine the contrary would not only include the supposition that the writer had lost his reason, but that also his readers at Corinth were *all* similarly afflicted.

It is also worthy of notice how St. Paul speaks of the leading *facts* of Christianity as matters of common

knowledge. His appeal to the then still surviving majority of a company of more than five hundred, who had themselves seen the Lord Jesus after His resurrection, carries with it the greatest force: it presents to us the evidence of a body of persons who knew from their own eyesight the truth of the leading miracle of the gospel.

Clement of Rome does not make it his practice to quote the books of the New Testament expressly, although, as in the present case, it is evident that he was acquainted with them. I will, however, give one sentence of his: he says,—"casting away from ourselves all unrighteousness and wickedness, covetousness, debate, malignity and deceit, whisperings and backbitings, hatred of God, despitefulness and pride, vain-gloriousness and inanity. For those that commit such things are hated by God, and not only those that commit them, but those also that have pleasure in them."—(*Ep.* 1 *ad Cor.* cap. 35.)

It would be a mere waste of words to seek to *prove* that Clement had Rom. i. 29—32 in his mind and memory. Such sequences of words and thoughts cannot be fortuitous. He is writing in the name of the Roman Church, which thus acknowledges the Epistle to the Romans.

I turn from Clement to Polycarp, whom I have already mentioned. This ancient martyr of Christ

addressed, in the early part of the second century, an Epistle to the Church of Philippi, in which he speaks of the Epistle which St. Paul had written to them—(cap. iii.). A large part of this letter is such an interweaving of sentences from the New Testament books, as evinces plainly not only the knowledge of them on the part of the writer, but also the perfect familiarity of his mind with them—a familiarity as great as that which we should find in any modern sermon.

The following are specimens:—"The love of money is the beginning of all sorrows: *we brought nothing into this world, neither have we anything to carry out*"—(cap. iv.). In another place he says, "*We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and each one must give account of himself*"—(cap. vi.). In another passage he says, "*Do we not know that the saints shall judge the world,* as Paul teaches?"—(Cap. xi.) Again, "*Be ye angry and sin not, and let not the sun go down upon your wrath*"—(cap. xii.). How distinctly do we see that Polycarp uses the first Epistle to Timothy, that to the Romans, the first to the Corinthians, and that to the Ephesians! The use of the last-mentioned book is all the more striking from the sentence of the Old Testament being combined with the same addition. He also in another place refers to the same Epistle, saying,—"knowing that by grace ye are saved, not of works"*—(cap. i.).

* In speaking of the Epistles, which bear St. Paul's name,

We are thus able to trace the common use of a *collection* of Epistles, bearing St. Paul's name, to an *early* part of the second century: we can show that no possibility of *mistake* could be admitted in such a case, for the testimony is given alike by many countries; imposture is equally impossible, for that could not be supposed without believing that all Christians everywhere were so possessed with a spirit of falsehood as to put forth holy writings as those of the Apostle Paul, and that for no imaginable reason,—and that this could be done without any trace of such an imposition being recorded, and without any voice being raised against it, either *in* the Church or amongst the bodies separated from it. No proof is more mathematically certain than that by which the contrary is proved to be absurd or impossible.

The testimonies which bring us back to the time of contemporaries of St. Paul, as to some of these Epistles, have no small cogency when we compare these Epistles together: they bear so thoroughly the impress of the same mind.

Now, there are no ancient works possessed of greater

---

as received in the former part of the second century, it is proper to state that the Epistle which the Church writers received as that to the *Ephesians*, was styled by Marcion, to the *Laodiceans*. Our copies call it, to the Ephesians; the question, however, is not one of authenticity, but only of name in the address;—both parties were equally agreed that it was written by St. Paul.

weight of evidence than these writings before us. We receive Cicero's letters as genuine, and yet no one supposes that we could find *each* one severally mentioned by an ancient writer: the quotations from some are considered as evidence to the collection as such. Here how much stronger is the case! These Epistles are all mentioned severally, as existing in the former part of the second century—as being then known as documents of established credit,—not some anonymous productions, but each bearing on its front the certificate of its origin which was then, and had previously been, regarded as authentic. It would be impossible to be more absolutely certain even as to the letters of Romaine or of John Newton.

THE FOUR GOSPELS.

I now pass on to the collected Gospels.

There is, to some minds, a difficulty in grasping the events of ages long past as definitely as if they had been of more recent occurrence. Let us then consider the collected Gospels, not as living in the nineteenth century, on the shore of the English Channel, but as those might do, who, in the second century, dwelt on the banks of the Rhone.

We find there a venerable teacher, Irenæus, the bishop of the Church at Lyons: from him we may ask for information on this subject. What can he tell us of the collected Gospels which the Christians used?

Irenæus says that the Gospels were *four*, and he gives most elaborate illustrations to show (as he thinks) that their number could neither be greater nor less. He illustrates his opinion by comparing the four faces of the cherubim with the four Evangelists; and he rests so fully on the Gospels being then known *as a collection*, that he calls the volume "*a fourfold Gospel*." He describes them severally thus:—

"That which is according to John, narrates Christ's princely, potential, and glorious generation, saying, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' and 'all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.' Wherefore that Gospel is full of all confidence, for His person is such. Now, that which is according to Luke, having a priestly impress, commenced with Zacharias the priest burning incense to God. For now was the fatted calf prepared, which should be slain, because of the finding again of the younger son. Matthew preaches his birth according to man, saying, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham;' and again, 'Now the birth of Christ was on this wise.' This Gospel, then, is of a human form; on which account, throughout the whole of the Gospel, the meek and lowly *man* is kept up. Mark commenced from the prophetic spirit descending from on high upon men, saying, 'The beginning of the Gospel

of Jesus Christ, as it is written in Isaiah the prophet'." —(l. ii. c. 11, § 8.)

He speaks so repeatedly and habitually of the four Gospels and their authors, that no doubt can exist as to *his* testimony on the subject.

But could this reception of these four Gospels be a mere local peculiarity?—we may, in reply, look from the shore of the Rhone to the land of Irenæus's early life: his testimony relates, not merely to the West, but also to Asia Minor, for that was the land of his Christian training. We may turn also to Egypt, where Clement of Alexandria gives, at the same time, an according testimony to the same four Gospels. So, too, we may look at Carthage, where, as we learn from Tertullian, who at this very time had arrived at man's estate, the same Gospels were used as the works of the same authors.

But did this unity, in the reception of the Gospel collection, originate in papal authority? Have we no traces of such claims at dominion over conscience, and may not this have influenced Irenæus and others? Now, we *have* at this very time a remarkable claim made by the bishop of Rome—a claim, however, which this very Irenæus, to whom we refer, *resisted.* The differences in the Church, as to the time of celebrating Easter, still continued; and Victor, bishop of Rome, usurped the authority of excluding from the fellowship of the Church, the Asiatic bishops and com-

munities that did not accord in judgment with him as to this point.

This caused Irenæus to write to Victor in terms of earnest remonstrance, so that he clearly shows that as yet no one Church possessed such dominant power over others, as that books of Scripture or anything else could be received on its authority.

We may thus look around us from the shores of the Rhone, and in whatever direction we turn, at the latter part of the second century, we find the Christian communities holding the same Gospels which they considered that they had received from the Apostolic age.

But in what relation did Christian teachers then, such as Irenæus, stand to the times of the Apostles? Irenæus himself shall tell us. He says, in addressing Florinus, who had introduced erroneous doctrines,—

"Thou didst never receive these doctrines from the elders who preceded us, who themselves had associated with the Apostles. When I was yet a boy, I saw thee in company with Polycarp in Asia Minor; for I remember what took place then better than what happens now. What we heard in childhood grows along with the soul, and becomes one with it, so that I can describe the place where the blessed Polycarp sat and spoke, his going in and out, his manner of life and the form of his person; the discourses which he delivered to the congregation; how he told of his intercourse with John and with the rest who had seen the Lord

how he reported their sayings, and what he had heard from them respecting the Lord, His miracles and His doctrines. All these things were told by Polycarp in accordance with holy Scripture, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses of the doctrine of salvation. Through the grace of God, given to me even then, did I listen to these things with eagerness; and wrote them down, not on paper, but in my heart; and by the grace of God, I constantly revive them again fresh before my memory. And I can witness, before God, that if the blessed and apostolic presbyter had heard such things, he would have cried out, stopped his ears, and (according to his custom) have said, 'O my good God! upon what times hast thou brought me, that I must endure this!' And he would have fled away from the place where seated or standing he had heard such discourses."

Such was the simple and definite line of information that connected Irenæus with the age of the Apostles.

From Justin Martyr we learn something of the sacred books of the Christians, in which the history of our Lord was contained, which were in use amongst them in the former half of the second century.

This early Christian writer was born at Shechem, in Palestine, about (as is supposed) the year 90. After a vain search for satisfaction, in the schools of philosophy, he became a Christian. In his first Apology, addressed to the emperor, Antoninus Pius, he describes

the worship of the Christians; and after having mentioned what was written by "*the Apostles in the Memorials*, which they have made, which are called *Gospels*," he says, that on Sunday the Christians, whether in cities or in country-places, held an united assembly, in which "the Memorials of the Apostles or the Writings of the Prophets are read, as time may permit." * In another place he describes these Chris-

* The following is Justin's full description of Christian worship in the second century:—

"On the day called Sunday, there is an assembly in one place of all who dwell in the cities or in the country, and *the Memorials of the Apostles* or the writings of the Prophets are read, as time may permit. Afterwards, when he who reads has ended, he who presides admonishes and exhorts, by word, to imitate these good things. Afterwards, we all stand up together and pray; and, as we said before, when we have made an end of prayer, bread is brought, and wine, and water, and he who presides offers prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people add their assent, saying, *Amen;* and those things for which thanks were given are distributed, and are partaken of by each one; and they are sent by the deacons to those who are not present. Those who are well-off, and who wish it, contribute, each one according to his own purpose what he wishes, and the collection is deposited with him who presides; and he assists orphans and widows, and those who are in need, through sickness or other cause, and those who are in bonds, and strangers who may be sojourning in the place; and, in fact, he takes care of all who may be in need.

"We all hold this united assembly on Sunday, since it is

tian writings more exactly; he says, "the Memorials which were drawn up by the Apostles and their companions."

Now, I wish to direct your attention to the manner in which Justin speaks of the public and habitual reading of the Gospels in the Christian assemblies. He mentions it to the emperor as a fact open to the knowledge of all. Justin's testimony is good enough to prove it; but it rests on a yet stronger ground of evidence, for it *must* have been habitually true if it could be thus mentioned.

Thus, when Melanchthon said, in the Augsburg Confession, "The Churches amongst us teach, with general consent, . . . that men cannot be justified before God by their own powers, merits, or works, but that they are justified freely for Christ's sake, through faith," the statement carried with it the guarantee of its truth. Now, Justin was well acquainted with the Christian communities in many parts: he had sojourned at Ephesus, Alexandria, and Rome; and it is evident that the memorials called Gospels, written by the Apostles and their companions, were thus used in all

---

the first day, in which God turned aside darkness and matter, and made the world; and Jesus Christ, our Saviour, on the same day arose from the dead; for they crucified Him the day before Saturday; and on the day after Saturday, which is Sunday, He was manifested to His apostles and disciples, and taught them things which we have offered, likewise, for your attention."

the Churches of which Justin knew aught. Justin's writings contain repeated citations which substantially accord with our four Gospels; so that these citations might show, that the books which the Church universally used in the days when Irenæus wrote, were the same that were in the hands of Justin. It is true that Justin cites loosely enough, and that he quotes from the Gospels two things that are not in ours; he cites, however, the Old Testament just as loosely, and refers to the Pentateuch for *two* facts which it does not contain: no one would, therefore, think that *his* Pentateuch was different from ours.

And yet some have said, that Justin only used apocryphal Gospels: if so, they must have resembled ours most marvellously, and they must have been attributed to authors who might be similarly described. And besides this, the whole of the Churches must have used the *same* apocryphal Gospels; and this must have been the case in the boyhood of that very Irenæus, who is so explicit a witness to *our* four Gospels. It certainly would require some degree of credulity to believe that all the Churches everywhere did, between the years 150 and 175, *change* the Gospels which they read publicly every Lord's-day. Had they done this, how could they have received the newly-adopted documents with such reverence as they did? In fact, the identity of Justin's Gospels with those mentioned by Irenæus, is more strongly evinced by the moral impossibilities im-

plied in the contrary supposition, than it could be in any other way.

We have, however, direct evidence also: for Tatian composed a kind of harmony of the Gospels, which was known by the name of *Dia Tessarōn*, i. e. "of the four," from its being an interwoven narrative from four Gospels. We learn from Irenæus himself, that this Tatian was a disciple of Justin Martyr, and that he fell into doctrinal errors, such as the condemnation of marriage, after his teacher's death. Tatian's Gospels were then evidently identical with those of Justin. We may also notice that the writer of the Canon in Muratori speaks of the Gospels of Luke and John by name, as the *third* and *fourth*; those of Matthew and Mark must undoubtedly have been described in the lost part of this fragment.

If, then, we see that the Churches everywhere used our four Gospels immediately after the apostolic age, and in the lifetime of the tens of thousands of Christians who had been contemporaries with the Apostles, it follows that this was nothing newly or suddenly adopted, but that it sprung even from the time when the apostolic guidance still continued. And what could have caused all Christians everywhere to read in public these four narratives, as the works of the Apostles Matthew and John, and of Mark and Luke, two companions of Apostles, except that they *knew*, as a fact, that these were their real authors?

I have dwelt long on a very plain case, simply because, in the present day, this is the very point of Christian evidence which is specially opposed. It is said that our four Gospels are not historical narratives, but that they came into existence at a later period than the time of the Apostles; that the accounts of Christ were at first *myths*, and that they were gradually embodied in a definite form. By a *myth* they seem to mean the personification of an idea: a *mythic* person would be the supposed character of a fable;—and to this they would bring down all that we know of the life and actions of our Lord. They say, that if we hold the Christ of our apprehension aright, it matters little whether we retain the belief in an *historical* Christ.*

* The process of supposed ratiocination, by which historical facts and persons in Scripture are reduced to mere *myths*, is something of the following kind. It is assumed that man had an intuitive consciousness of his own want of a deliverer; that this want led to the process of thinking out what sort of a deliverer was suited to the need, and *how* this redeemer should act in order to work out man's salvation: these ideas (it is then assumed) led to the *thought* of the incarnation of a divine person,—to his being *supposed* to have died, and risen, etc.; and then it is assumed that the Gospels sprung into existence at a later period, when these supposed thoughts had assumed a concrete form in the minds of those who had received them. But does man *naturally* know his need of such a salvation as that which God sets forth, through faith, in the blood of Jesus Christ? So far from this being the case, the scheme of Christianity runs directly counter to man's preconceived thoughts. The Cross of

It is difficult to analyse such vague thoughts. This, however, I know, that *if* the New Testament possesses

---

Christ was, indeed, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. The *mythic* theory is a present proof how little minds now like the mode of salvation set forth in the New Testament.

It is in vain to endeavour to set aside the existence and acts of historic personages by calling them *myths*. Julius Cæsar would make (on the novel theory) a thorough *myth*. The recorded events of his life are so peculiar,—his connection with such varied countries, his actings from Britain to Egypt, might all be pronounced as proofs that he was not an *historic* person; he might thus be easily explained away into the embodiment of the idea of the transition of the Roman state from a republic to an empire,—of the spread of Roman institutions into the West and East, and the introduction of Roman civilization into barbarous countries, such as Gaul and Britain. It might be suggested that some British writer gave the *myth* its form; for otherwise, why should his military success in Britain be represented as so incomplete? It might be argued that the accounts of Cæsar's death show the whole to be mythic; for how else could the Roman senate solemnly confirm all Cæsar's acts, and yet proclaim an amnesty for those who had assassinated him? Might not the fact, also, of the name of *Cæsar* being used in all succeeding ages as a title, be taken as a proof of the absence of historic reality as to the alleged Julius Cæsar?

These points are strong when compared with what the mythic theory has to object to the reality of Jesus Christ. What shall be said of a system which owns that man needs a Saviour, and yet deprives him of the historic reality of that Saviour to whom the Scripture testifies!

one particle of authenticity, then the historical Christ is the person to whom it points. I can apprehend no Christ, no deliverer of guilty man, except that historical person—the eternal Son of God, who became man, to redeem us men by the shedding of His blood, and who has risen again, and now sitteth at the right hand of God, from whence He shall come to be the Judge of quick and dead. Our warrant for believing in *this* Christ is the record which we possess in the New Testament.

It is, indeed, marvellous how any imagination can have run so wild, as to think that a *supposed* myth about a *supposed* Christ can have become embodied in four narratives so simple and definite, and that the *real fact* of Christianity can have sprung out of such fancied dreams.

But it is said that, at this distance of time, the greatest uncertainty must of course spread over the scene. Nay, but lapse of time makes *no* difference with regard to *proved facts:* that which is proved to have been known truth eighteen hundred years ago, is known truth still. It is as certain *now* that Julius Cæsar invaded Britain, as it was at the Christian era. But we have no occasion to look at these things from a long distance. We can take our stand in the latter part of the second century, and look back from that era to the apostolic age. The opponents admit that our four Gospels were in general use A. D. 175. They suggest,

however, that they came into existence, at least in their present form, between the year 150 and that year; that is to say, by some unknown and unrecorded cause, the Christians were induced everywhere, in twenty-five years, to adopt our Gospels, and also to *believe* that they had possessed them from the apostolic age. This is mythic and unhistorical with a vengeance.

It presents difficulties enough to be explained. The number of the copies of the Gospels which were in use at the admitted date, A. D. 175, would be, at a very moderate computation, *sixty thousand*, amongst the Christian communities throughout the Roman empire; —and all these copies must have been received and used without any opposing voice being raised!

Standing at the year 175, we might find enough individuals living who still remembered the apostolic age: they had only to look back seventy-five years,— as long as we have to the old American war;—it was not six months ago* that Dr. Routh, president of Magdalen College, Oxford, was speaking to me, with clear memory, of events which occurred then and before, when he was a student in that University.

It is thus of importance to trace our Gospels, step by step, backwards through the second century, for thus we show the baselessness of the mythic, unhistoric theory. And now, as to *single Gospels*, we can go yet

* That is, when this Lecture was delivered, October, 1851.

further in our notices than we can of the collected volume.

At the close of the first century there were living at Ephesus, besides the Apostle John, two others of the immediate disciples of our Lord when on earth,—John the Presbyter, and Aristion.* Now, we know from Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, what John the Presbyter stated concerning the Gospels of Matthew and Mark: of Mark, he says, that he was the interpreter of Peter, and though not a hearer or follower of our Lord Himself, he wrote down very carefully what Peter had narrated; so that (he adds) "*he erred in nothing.*" This testimony of an immediate disciple of Christ is deeply interesting. He speaks as clearly of St. Matthew's Gospel, mentioning that he wrote it in Hebrew.

* The words of Eusebius (iii. 39) are, "Aristion, and John the Presbyter, the disciples of the Lord." In the "Edinburgh Review," July, 1851, p. 37, *note*, it is said that the words, "the disciples of the Lord," "*are probably an interpolation.*" No reason is given why we should so regard them; and in looking at Dr. Burton's critical edition of "Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History," it appears that there is no authority whatever for expunging them. Not only is all external evidence in their favour, but also, if they were omitted, there would be no purpose in mentioning John the Presbyter, and Aristion, in the passage, had they not been like Andrew, Peter, and the others, whose names are introduced, themselves immediate disciples of Christ when on earth.

The endeavour to evade the force of this evidence is made to rest on the singular theory that John the Presbyter, and Papias who records his words, did not mean *our* Gospels of Matthew and Mark, but some other books of which we have no account whatever, which bore the same names! Suppose we were to suggest that the history of Thucydides, which we possess, is not that which the ancients cite as such, but another book bearing the same name. What would be said to this idea?

I have already shown how Polycarp interweaves in his epistle, words and sentences from the Epistles of the Apostle Paul: we find a similar introduction of words which exist in our Gospels. He writes thus:—"The Lord said, Judge not that ye be not judged; forgive and ye shall be forgiven; be merciful that ye may obtain mercy. With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again. And, Blessed are the poor, and they that are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God"—(cap. 2). In another place, "The Lord said, The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak"—(cap. 7).

Clement of Rome, also, in his epistle has this statement:—"The Lord said, Be merciful that ye may obtain mercy; forgive that ye may be forgiven; as ye do so shall it be done to you; as ye give so shall it be given to you; as ye judge so shall ye be judged; . . . . . with what measure ye mete, therewith shall it be measured to you"—(cap. 13).

These sentences, especially those of Polycarp, appear like references, more or less exact, to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke: the only reason for doubting is that these writers might have had some *oral* knowledge of this teaching of our Lord:—they refer, however, to what He said, as if *those to whom they wrote* knew of these things likewise.

St. Paul, in his first Epistle to Timothy, speaks thus:—"The Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn;" and, "*The labourer is worthy of his reward.*" This latter sentence is found only in Luke x. 7; it appears to be linked by the Apostle with the citation from the Law under the common term of Scripture. There is, I believe, in the New Testament no instance of two sentences, joined by the copulative, being introduced with such a phrase as "the Scripture saith," when the latter is merely an addition. I have no doubt myself that St. Paul gives us the earliest testimony, and that of an authoritative kind, to the Gospel of Luke, his companion.

Besides the evidence of writers who belong to the Church, we may (as Irenæus himself did) appeal to the Gnostic sects, who made more or less use of *our* Gospels. Thus, Marcion's Gospel was a truncated copy of St. Luke's, from which he extruded what struck him as inconsistent with his notion that our Lord possessed no real humanity: he left, however, unamputated

quite enough to refute his strange ideas. Indeed, while the different bodies separated from the Church showed that they were acquainted, in the second century, with all our four Gospels, it is pointed out by Irenæus that *each* Gospel, separately, was upheld by some one particular party,—a plain proof of their existence before these bodies quitted the communion of the Church.

Celsus, the heathen philosopher, who wrote at length against the Christians and their religion, is an important witness to the early existence and use of our Gospels.

Thus, then, we have distinct historic grounds for holding fast the Epistles which bear St. Paul's name as being his genuine works, and for ascribing the four Gospels to the authors whose names they bear, that is, to use the words of Justin Martyr, "Apostles and their companions."

I have not rested on other evidence, such as that of undesigned coincidence, by which Paley demonstrates so satisfactorily that the Epistles of St. Paul, and the book of Acts, are alike genuine works,—that they *could not*, in fact, be forgeries: this evidence is of a kind extremely cogent.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

In passing on to the remaining books, I begin with the Acts of the Apostles: this book was, in the second century, known and received as the work of Luke, as

much as his Gospel. I need only refer to Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, as witnesses against whose testimony no exception can be made. The Canon in Muratori is also a valuable document as to this book. I need not enlarge on this; for the testimony is sufficient to carry us to the time of those who belonged to the Apostolic age.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

In speaking of the Epistles to which St. Paul's *name* is prefixed, that to the Hebrews was of course excluded. The difficulty, as to *this* Epistle, is not on the points of antiquity and authority, but entirely as to authorship. In the early centuries it was but little known in the West, and thus, in the Canon in Muratori, it is not mentioned. In the East, however, it was well known and received,—and *there* it was ascribed to the Apostle Paul. Clement of Alexandria is a sufficient witness on this point. The North African Church, likewise, knew of this Epistle at an early period; for Tertullian quotes it, ascribing it, however, to *Barnabas*. All the early accounts would show that it was considered to come from what might be called *the school of St. Paul*, whether *written* by himself or not. Though the West had comparatively little knowledge of this Epistle in the second century, yet it must have been known there, in the first cen-

tury, as an approved document; for Clement of Rome, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, *interweaves* large portions of the Epistle before us. It has been said that "allusions prove nothing"; however, in such a case as this they prove a great deal. This Epistle claims *authority* on the part of the writer; he, therefore, who could approvingly introduce extracts from it into another work, so far sanctions that authority; and this Clement of Rome has done.* We are able, therefore, to say that *in* the Apostolic age it was received as an authoritative document. In the former part of the second century, Justin Martyr (*Apol.* i.) says, that Christ is called an *Apostle*,—a term which indicates his acquaintance with this Epistle, and his acknowledgment of its authority. The difficulty connected with its authorship being directly ascribed to St. Paul is principally found in the omission of his name at the beginning, and the difference of style throughout. Thus, some of those who ascribed it in a general sense to St. Paul, thought that the ideas were his, but that the language was that of another; in fact, that it bore the same relation to St. Paul, as St. Luke's Gospel does to him, and St. Mark's to St. Peter. Thus Origen, who quotes this Epistle as St. Paul's, says, that of the actual *writer* "God only knoweth."†

* It would fill several pages to give the reiterated passages in which Clement interweaves the words and order of thoughts of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

† Cited in Euseb. Hist. Ecc. l. vi. 25.

Ancient testimony is abundantly strong as to the authority of this book: it generally ascribes it to St. Paul;—and this is quite sufficient for us to receive it with all confidence, and to consider it as Pauline in the same general sense.

CATHOLIC EPISTLES.

FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER.

The Catholic Epistles were not formed into a collected volume at an early period: they were only known and used individually. Hence, we cannot be surprised that some of them were much better known than others. Two only of these writings stand in Eusebius's catalogue of books universally acknowledged.

The first Epistle of Peter need not detain us long: Polycarp uses it as freely and fully as a modern preacher might do.* Papias, in the same age, cited testimonies from it, as we learn from Eusebius (l. iii. 39). Clement of Alexandria and Irenæus quote it *by name,* in the second century, as also does Tertullian: he only, however, cites it in one passage, instead of making the continual use of it that he does of the Gospels and St. Paul's Epistles. This is natural enough, as this writing was only a separate volume, and not part of the collections already formed.

* The following is the first passage of Polycarp in which he

FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN.

The first Epistle of John was also used by Polycarp and Papias, and by the writers of the second century, Irenæus, Clement, and Tertullian, by name; as is also the case in the Canon in Muratori.

BOOKS OPPOSED BY SOME.

EPISTLE OF JAMES.

The Epistle of James is the first book that we have to consider, of those described by Eusebius as *opposed by some.*

We are not (as I said already) to feel surprise that Epistles not addressed to a particular Church should be for a time comparatively unknown; this would especially be what we might expect as to an Epistle to those from amongst the Israelitish nation who had believed in Christ.

The first who makes *express* mention of this Epistle by name, is Origen, in the former part of the third century: he quotes it as the Epistle attributed to James.

---

interweaves the words of 1 Peter, and this may serve as a specimen of the rest. "In whom though ye see Him not, ye believe; and believing ye rejoice with joy unutterable and full of glory"—(cap. i.).

Hence, it is *probable* that Origen's teacher, Clement of Alexandria, knew of this Epistle: this supposition is confirmed by a statement of Cassiodorus, a writer of the sixth century, that Clement gave a summary of this Epistle (together with others) in a work of his which is now lost: it has, however, been doubted whether the name of *James*, in the passage of Cassiodorus, is not put in mistake for *Jude*. Irenæus says of Abraham, that "*he was called the friend of God*"—(l. iv. c. 16, § 2). This looks like an acquaintance with this Epistle. A strong testimony to this writing is given by the old Syriac version of the New Testament, in which, although the other books "opposed by some" are absent, this Epistle is contained. In the fourth century we see, from Jerome, that the authenticity of this Epistle was very plainly asserted, and the Epistle was then, as now, ascribed to the Apostle James, the son of Alphæus. This is just what we might expect: a writing, little known at first, obtains a more general circulation, and the knowledge of the writing and its reception go almost together. The contents entirely befit the antiquity which the writing claims: no *evidence* could be given for rejecting it: it differs in its whole nature from the foolish and spurious writings put forth in the name of this James; and thus its gradual reception is to be accounted for from its having, from early times, been known by some to be genuine (as shown by the Syriac version), and this knowledge having afterwards spread more widely.

SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER.

The second Epistle of Peter was but little known in early times:—it professes (ch. iii. 1) to be addressed to the same persons as the first Epistle had been. *Cappadocia* is one of the countries mentioned in the salutation of the former:—this then must be supposed to have been best known in that and the surrounding regions. Accordingly, from Cappadocia we get the earliest decisive testimony. In the middle of the third century, Firmilianus, bishop of Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, writes to Cyprian, accusing the bishop of Rome of "abusing the holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, who in their *Epistles* have execrated heretics, and admonished us to avoid them." The mention of Peter can only carry our minds to *this* Epistle. We learn from Origen that it was known at this time as a writing about which there were doubts: he knew of no evidence against it, and the doubts then entertained are well balanced by Firmilianus's distinct testimony, springing from that very region to which we might especially look for evidence. This Epistle is not mentioned by Tertullian,—a fact at which we need not wonder, since he only quotes the first Epistle of Peter, although universally owned, *once*. Eusebius tells us that Clement of Alexandria commented on the Catholic Epistles, both those which were universally owned,

and those which are opposed by some: hence, it has been reasonably concluded that he knew *this* Epistle. This writing certainly is utterly unlike the forged documents, in the name of Peter, which were put forth in the second century: it belongs, at least, to an age anterior to that of Firmilianus and Origen, and thus we approach the Apostolic period. Now, Clement of Rome has a passage which seems to allude to part of this Epistle: he says,—"On account of hospitality and godliness, Lot was delivered from Sodom, when all the neighbouring country was condemned with fire and brimstone. The Lord made it manifest that He doth not forsake those who trust in Him; but those who turn to other ways, He appoints to punishment and suffering"—(cap. xi.). The connection of *words* and *thoughts* appears to show that 2 Pet. ii. 6-9* was in the writer's mind. In the time after Eusebius, but little doubt was expressed as to this Epistle, although the points of difference in the *style* were perceived. As to this, let it be observed that the subject continually *forms the style;* no one would write a hortatory or didactic address in the same style as a stern

* "Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered just Lot. . . . . The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment, to be punished."

rebuke. I may add that this Epistle is much more like St. Peter, as preaching in the Acts, than is the first.

It must be observed that the express testimony of Firmilianus, coming as it does from Cappadocia itself, has the utmost importance in connection with this writing. If we have no proof of its having been as widely diffused as other books of the New Testament, all we have to ask is, whether we have *sufficient* testimony as to its existence and authorship. Internally it claims to be written by St. Peter; and this claim is confirmed by the Christians of that very region in whose custody it *ought* to have been found.

SECOND AND THIRD EPISTLES OF JOHN.

The second Epistle of John has as much evidence as so short a writing would be likely to possess: it is expressly mentioned and cited by Irenæus (l. iii. c. 16, § 8), whose links of connection with that Apostle have been already stated; it is also mentioned and quoted by Clement of Alexandria. *The third* Epistle of John is mentioned by Origen, together with the second, as writings about which judgments might perhaps be divided. Dionysius of Alexandria, however, in part his contemporary, speaks undoubtingly of both.—(*In Euseb. H. E.* l. vii. 25.)

The Canon in Muratori owns at least *one* of these Epistles: in my opinion, *both*. From the mode in which Jerome speaks of these Epistles, we may conclude that the doubt was not as to their being really sacred writings, but as to which *John* was the author, —John the Apostle, or John the Presbyter,—a doubt which is fully met by Irenæus and the writer of the fragmentary canon.

EPISTLE OF JUDE.

We find quite sufficient early testimony to the Epistle of Jude, for it is mentioned in Muratori's Canon, by Clement of Alexandria (*Pæd.* p. 280), and by Tertullian (*De Cultu Fœm.* i. 3). We are able, therefore, at once to repudiate the doubts expressed by some in the beginning of the fourth century, because of earlier evidence which ascribes this Epistle to Jude, the brother of James.

THE APOCALYPSE.

Eusebius speaks of the book of Revelation in a very peculiar manner—perhaps a book universally received —perhaps one altogether spurious.

Not so, however, did the second century judge: Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, near Laodicea, the contemporary of the Apostle John, received and used this book.—(*Andreas, in Apoc.*)

Justin Martyr, before the middle of the second century, held his contention with Trypho, the Jew, at Ephesus, where St. John had been living thirty or thirty-five years before. He says that the Revelation had been given to "John, one of the twelve Apostles of Christ." Irenæus, so closely connected as he had been with the immediate disciples of St. John, gives a similar testimony: he even tells us *when* St. John saw the Revelation, almost, he says, in his own days, about the end of the reign of Domitian—(l. v. c. 30, § 3). As to the true reading of a passage, he refers to the information which he had received from those who had known John face to face. Melito, bishop of Sardis, in the second century, wrote a book on the Revelation of John.—(*Euseb.* l. iv. 26.) All this evidence is more or less connected with the very region of the seven Churches in Asia, to whom the book was addressed.

In Egypt we have the testimony of Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* pp. 207, 667), and, after him, of Origen; in North Africa we have Tertullian (*De Præs.* c. 33); and at a little later time, we have (at Rome, probably) Hippolytus.—(*Opp.* p. 18.). There was thus the united testimony of the East and West.

Caius, a Roman presbyter of the end of the second century, is said (*Euseb.* l. iii. 28) to have rejected this book: but this could have no weight against such evidence. Dionysius of Alexandria, in the middle of the third century, in opposing the doctrine of the millennial

reign of Christ (*Euseb.* l. vii. 24), chose to ascribe this book to John the Presbyter, and not to the Apostle: but still he elsewhere uses it as an authority.—(*Euseb.* l. vii. 10.) The growing opposition to Millenarianism led to an acquiescence in the view which regarded this book as non-apostolic: hence, probably, the peculiar language employed by Eusebius. Of course we shall adhere to the contemporary evidence, which ascribes this book to the beloved disciple, instead of following mere arbitrary conjectures.

Indeed, it may be observed, that there is perhaps no book of the New Testament for which we have such clear, ample, and numerous testimonies in the second century, as we have in favour of the Apocalypse. And the more closely the witnesses were themselves connected with the Apostle John (as was the case with Irenæus), the more full and explicit is their testimony. That doubts should prevail in after ages, must have originated either in ignorance of the earlier testimony, or else from some supposed intuition as to what an Apostle *ought* to have written. The objections raised on the ground of internal *style*, etc., can weigh nothing against the actual evidence. It is in vain to argue *à priori*, that St. John *could* not have written this book, when we have the evidence of several competent witnesses that he *did* write it.

RESULTS OF EVIDENCE.

I have now discussed all the books of the New Testament, and to this I may add, that if we were to investigate other remains of antiquity, we could rarely find one-tenth part of the evidence for works undoubtedly genuine; and even this evidence is often only found after intervals much greater than that from the Apostolic age to the end of the second century.

Historic evidence embraces a much wider range than that of eye-witnesses. Thus we do not, in the slightest degree, doubt the facts which Bede mentions in his history as occurring a century and a half, or two centuries, before the time when he wrote. We conclude that he made due inquiries of those who could inform him of what had taken place before his time. A person who takes pains may learn much orally, on good authority, as to past events. I can well remember the interest with which, when a child, I listened to accounts of the Scotch Rebellion, in 1745, under Prince Charles Edward Stewart;—and these things were told me not on report, but by an eye-witness. Things thus learned (as Irenæus says), grow with us; so that the whole of that rebellion would have been a history in my mind even if I had never read a word on the subject. This is wholly different from hearsay report: and, observe that this period of 106 years is as great as that between

the Apostolic age and the time when Origen had arrived at man's estate. A very few lives may continue testimony for a much longer period. In the popedom of Sixtus V. (1585-90), was born Giovanni-Battista Altieri. When very old he became Pope, in 1670, under the name of Clement X.: he died in 1676. Now, in March, 1846, I visited at Rome the convent of Santa Francesca Romana; the abbess of this convent was a princess of the Altieri family, then aged almost 100. This abbess had known several in her own family, very aged of course when she was young, who had been acquainted with their kinsman, Pope Clement X. In conversing with the old abbess of these things, it seemed as if I was transported back two centuries and more. Here were links of connection, which carried me back into the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Two hundred and fifty years carry us from the time of St. Paul to that of Eusebius,—the extreme interval over which our inquiries have been extended.

Has not, then, the requirement of the rule of evidence laid down by St. Augustine been fully met? We can show that a successional series of writers, from the age immediately subsequent to that of the Apostles, have mentioned, or used (and, in general, extensively), the books of the New Testament. And if, with regard to some, such as the Epistle of James and the second Epistle of Peter, the indications are less

frequent, we have only to inquire whether they are not sufficient. As to the books in general, the evidence is so cumulative that nothing more attested is presented to our notice.

I have *indicated* the evidence on many points without stating it at length; this has only been, however, the case when the facts are unquestioned. I have omitted vast masses of evidence as to many of the books, not because it is not both good and valuable, but because a few unquestionable witnesses sufficed to prove the points. I have also passed by many statements which are often brought forward as evidence, because of some difficulty or doubt which may attach itself to these testimonies. An advocate may easily invalidate the force of his case, by adding weak or doubtful evidence to that which is beyond exception. Cavils may be raised against what is weak, which will undermine, in the thoughts of others, that which is strong. Harm has often been done to Christian evidence by referring to writers for that which their works do not contain, except by doubtful interpretations.

Here, then, we have plain historic reasons for accepting the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, as the genuine works of eight persons, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, and Jude. But will this evidence apply to *these* books alone? I asked, Why do we receive the Acts of the Apostles, and reject

the Acts of Paul and Thecla? I have answered the former part of the inquiry; I will now briefly reply to the second.—Because the Acts of Paul and Thecla, though written by an Asiatic presbyter, who had known Paul, was never received by contemporary Christians, and those of the age immediately subsequent, as an authentic history: and further, as we learn from Tertullian and Jerome, the author of the book was excluded by the Apostle John from his office of presbyter, for having written it.*

And as to other early writings, though we may find, occasionally, one or two who use them and cite them, yet this is the rare exception; it is as much a matter of individual opinion, as it is when we now find a Protestant who believes in the divine authority of some book of the Apocrypha.

But if this be the evidence in favour of the New Testament books, what is that which can be brought to meet it? Should we not hear *both* sides? THERE

* This strange book, "The Acts of Paul and Thecla," is one of the earliest of the apocryphal writings of Christians (or nominal Christians) which has come down to us. It has, probably, been altered by additions and omissions, but substantially it appears to be the original work of the first century. It has hitherto been known only in the very corrupt text published by Grabe: Prof. Tischendorf has just edited it, far more correctly, from three MSS. in the Bibliothèque du Roi at Paris, in his "Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha."

IS NO COUNTER EVIDENCE WHATSOEVER. Surmises and hinted doubts are *all* that can be brought to meet the united testimony of the early Christian Church, scattered in many regions, yet testifying to the transmission of the same books. But might not this common testimony be only a *tradition?* If tradition be used in an indefinite sense, then I say, certainly not. For this testimony goes back so far as to exclude the lapse of time needful to give birth to indefinite tradition. And, besides, the tradition of something to be propagated by mere oral report, is wholly different from the account which is received relative to a monument inscribed with a record, or a book which claims (as do St. Paul's Epistles) to be written by any well-known individual. The received account then becomes a sort of public consent to the recorded inscription, whatever it be.

Those who seek to invalidate evidence by means of surmises, represent ordinary minds as incapable of nicely balancing such points. They say that without certain habits of study and mental training we cannot do this. But is the allegation true? Can it be applied generally? Certainly we so act as if we thought that minds in general are capable of appreciating evidence, when placed before them intelligibly. We do not seek for profound scholars, or men of most acute intellect, as if the *facts* in question in judicial inquiries could only be determined by such. And though we

sometimes find a brainless juryman, incapable of comprehending evidence, yet this does not prevent our considering that men in general are competent to weigh testimony to *facts*. Mental training and experience of a particular kind, are certainly necessary to enable any one so to investigate facts, and to arrange the evidence on which they rest, as to present them intelligibly before others, but this is so done for the very purpose of putting them in possession of the evidence which enables them to grasp the *facts* as such.

It has been said that the investigation of Christian evidences is on the whole unsatisfactory, because the point to which it is intended to lead the inquiry is known beforehand. This objection is very much in accordance with the habit of mind which loves a considerable degree of uncertainty, and which wishes to make the first elements of truth a mere field for speculation.

But if this objection be good, will it not apply to other subjects also? For instance, in mathematical studies we know very well as soon as a theorem is enunciated, *what the point is* which the teacher intends to prove. We are not instructed how to demonstrate that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles, in order that this should afterwards be in our minds a debatable question, but we learn the demonstration that this may thenceforth be held as an established and unquestionable fact. Just so is it as to

the evidence for the records of our religion. We do not prove the genuineness of the New Testament books on any grounds of mere *opinion*, so that what seems established to-day may be overturned to-morrow, but we demonstrate it by evidence, which loses no part of its value by lapse of time, any more than time can weaken the force of a mathematical demonstration.

EVIDENCE FROM THE CHANNELS OF TRANSMISSION.

If we wish to find the records of a corporate body, we should seek for them in the custody of that corporation itself: if found there, the records may speak for themselves as to the authority which may attach to them. And thus it is with regard to the Scriptures: the Old Testament was given to the Jews, and they have transmitted it to us; the New Testament was given to the Christian community, and they have delivered it on even to our days; and the early writers of the Church have given us sufficient attestation that the books which we have are the same which they had from the beginning. Thus do we receive the Scriptures from what might formally be considered the *proper custody*, even if the early specific evidence had been less strong.

I was present, about twenty years ago, at an investi-

gation, in which a corporate body found it needful to produce the charter which gave them a certain extent of jurisdiction. A document was produced;—on examination it was seen that it was not the original charter, but it was (as it professed to be) a transcript which had been made 550 years before. This transcript had been admitted in the reign of James II. as *secondary* evidence of what the contents of the original charter had been. But when the document was read, it showed that the corporation, who brought it forward, had habitually acted in contravention of almost all its provisions. They had enforced dues and tolls in defiance of its limitations. Its production thus condemned them so thoroughly, that they could never again establish their claims to these tolls. No one, certainly, could, after this, suspect that the document—mere transcript as it was—was anything contrived by the corporation: its genuineness was proved even by the testimony which it bore against those who brought it forward.

Thus has it been with regard to the Old Testament and the Jews, and the New Testament and the Church. Each is a witness against the collective body which has transmitted it. In each case we have not the original documents, but only transcripts; and in each the transmission is confirmed by the contents of the documents. Just as the production of the charter, to which I referred, condemned the corporation which

relied on it, so does the Old Testament condemn the Jews, and the New Testament the practical and doctrinal condition for ages, of the Churches that transmitted it. They affirm its divine authority; and the testimony which it bears against them is such, that we cannot suppose it possible that they would assert this on any grounds but those of believing this to be the truth.

In bringing forward witnesses to the authorship and transmission of the New Testament books, I confined myself to the earlier centuries: if this period gives us satisfactory evidence, we need only inquire further *how* these books have been transmitted from the fourth century and onward.

And here let me remark, that many a document is presented to us without any array of extrinsic evidence. A MS. is found which shows that the book has some antiquity. The internal character of the book agrees with the age of the alleged author, and perhaps the whole scope shows that it is an ancient production. Thus, a MS. written in the middle ages, and now preserved in the Bibliothèque du Roi at Paris, has been published this year [1851] at Oxford: I know the MS. well; and when M. Emmanuel Miller, of Paris, was copying it for the press, I examined with him several of the passages. Now, the work contained in this MS. belongs *undoubtedly* to the early part of the third century of our era; critics are not agreed as to the

author, but the events to which allusion is made, and the heretical doctrines attacked, are rightly considered to be sufficient evidence as to when the author lived. And so, too, many ancient records may be brought to light which we feel that we can confidently use as historical data. Of what value, otherwise, would be the Assyrian records discovered of late at Nineveh? The circumstances of the discovery and transmission are judged to be a sufficient warrant in this case, as well as in that of the Arundelian Marbles, and in other instances.

The transmission of the New Testament books to our times, has been accompanied by circumstances of a far more confirming character. Ancient books have come down to us through MSS., either in the language in which they were originally written, or in translations, or in both. The latter case is true of the New Testament. There now exist MSS., in the original Greek, of the New Testament books, of every age, from the fourth century inclusive, to the time when they were printed. This is the fullest guarantee to us that these are the identical books to which the chain of witnesses, that I adduced, bear testimony. The MSS., also, are of importance in the evidence that they bear in favour of those books which Eusebius describes as *doubted by some*;—for we find no MS. containing a collection of Epistles in which those are rejected which some then controverted. But besides

MSS. we have versions:—of these, some, such as the Syriac and old Latin, were made (as is almost certain) in the second century; while in or before the fourth century, there were formed Egyptian versions in the two dialects of upper and lower Egypt, as well as a Gothic translation, and a new one into Latin. Others, such as the Æthiopic and Armenian, were made in a period immediately subsequent. Of the Gothic version we possess but a part; and of the rest all, except the old Syriac, are witnesses for *all* our New Testament books.

There is not such a mass of transmissional evidence in favour of any classical work. The existing MSS. of Herodotus and Thucydides are modern enough when compared with some of those of the New Testament.

Thus *every country*, into the language of which the New Testament books were translated in early times, is a witness to us of their transmission.

CLAIMS OF ROME.

But the Church of Rome tells us, "You received the New Testament through our Church; it is only through us that you know its genuineness; you admit our evidence as to what is of divine authority, and therefore you must own that we have the right to declare to you what God teaches in the Scripture."

These are high-sounding claims. But, before I question one single fact contained in them, there is a

fallacy to be pointed out, which deprives the claim of all its force.

Rome begs the question as to a very important principle. A plain statement of the case shows this—

"*He who transmits an authoritative document possesses the right to interpret it.*

"Rome has transmitted the Scripture to you.

"Therefore, Rome possesses the right to interpret it to you."

It is only by tacitly assuming the extravagant premise, that the Romish argument has a semblance of force.

Similarly we might conclude that the corporation, to which I referred just now, had the right to explain its charter as it pleased,—that the postman has the right of expounding to us the letters which he delivers, —and that the constable possesses the privilege of explaining the meaning of the magistrate's summons.

This principle, if true, would justify the Jews in their explanations of the Old Testament; so that we must receive as authoritative all that is taught in their traditions—the Mishna and Gemara—in spite of what our Lord says to them, "Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

But further, it is not *true* that we receive the Scriptures through the Church of Rome *alone*.

In the witnesses of the first three centuries you may

remember that none, except Clement of Rome, were bishops of that place;—so that Romanists can claim not one of these witnesses, besides, as a Pope: and as to this Clement,—the name of Pope but ill befits him when he pretends to no commission to write authoritatively,—he argues instead of dogmatising; and he shows such proofs of human infirmity as must be rather mortifying to an upholder of papal claims:—he even in his simplicity (for a good simple soul he seems to have been) refers to the story of the phœnix as a *fact* in natural history. Other witnesses supply us with not a little incidental testimony against Romish claims.

But besides Rome as a channel, we also receive the Scriptures through the Churches of other lands. The Latin version of the Scriptures was diffused, long before papal claims were advanced, through Italy, North Africa, Gaul, the Spanish Peninsula, and Britain. The Oriental Churches have handed down each its own version; and for the original Greek text we have to thank the Greek Church.

Thus, all these have been so many separate and consenting channels of transmission. So true is it, as defined by our reformers, that "The Church is a witness and keeper of holy Writ."

Thoroughly do I repudiate the idea of any infallible Church, congregation, or body of men: I would not say that in anything the Church *could* not err; but on

the plain grounds of testimony, already given, I do state that, in the transmission of the New Testament books, the Church *hath not erred.*

TRANSMISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO US.

ENGLISH VERSIONS.

To ourselves, in this country, the Scriptures have come through the medium of translations. The ancient British Church appears, in common with all the West, to have used the Latin version, which was then thoroughly understood wherever there was found any mental culture. But we early find proofs of vernacular translations.

> "In Saxon days, which we are wont to call Ancient"——

no restriction on such versions was as yet known.—Pope Gregory the Great, who sent Augustine the monk to preach to the Saxons, was an encourager of the reading of Scripture. One of the books which he transmitted, in the year 596, to Augustine, is a Psalter yet in existence: this has, by a more recent hand, been interlined with an Anglo-Saxon version of each Latin word. And this was the manner in which several of the translations into that language were

formed. The Latin was the basis; although, by the appointment of Theodore of Tarsus to the archbishopric of Canterbury, and by the Greek books which he brought with him from Cilicia, some knowledge of Greek had diffused itself among us even in the seventh century.

But it is to the Reformation, in its dawning and its more extensive spread, that we must look, for the channels which have brought the Scriptures to our homes and hearths. For this service we are especially indebted to three men, John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, and Miles Coverdale,—three men whose memory every Christian heart amongst us ought to esteem very highly in love for their works' sake. Even if English versions of Scripture previously existed, it was John Wycliffe, sometime Master of Baliol College, Oxford, who first set forth the holy Scripture for the instruction of the people in the truth of God. To this end he toiled with a body enfeebled by palsy, but sustained by the grace of Christ.

"Of the book that had been a sealed-up book,
He tore the clasps, that the nation,
With eyes unbandaged might thereon look,
And learn to read salvation.

To the death 'twas thine to persevere,
Though the tempest around thee rattled;
And wherever Falsehood was lurking, there
Thy heroic spirit battled.

And though thy bones from the grave were torn,
Long after thy life was ended,
The sound of thy words, to times unborn,
Like a trumpet-call, descended.

A light was struck—a light which showed
How hideous were Error's features,
And how perverted the law, bestowed
By heaven to guide its creatures.

At first for that spark, amidst the dark,
The friar his fear dissembled;
But soon at the fame of Wycliffe's name
The throne of St. Peter trembled."

DAVID M. MOIR. (Δ.)

Wycliffe's career might have been stopped by dominant Church influence, had not the Papacy sought to strengthen itself in England by taking Oxford into its own hands, and separating that University from the control of the bishop of Lincoln (in whose diocese it then was), and from the metropolitan jurisdiction of the archbishop of the province. At this very time occurred the schism of the Papacy, and thus the two Popes—one at Rome, and the other at Avignon—were more occupied in opposing each other, than in destroying an English heretic.

Widely was Wycliffe's version of the Scriptures circulated. Many of the noble copies of this translation, which still exist, were probably written for the families of distinction (whose number was not inconsiderable)

who valued the possession of the word of God in their own tongue. The most interesting copies, however, are those of a very small size, containing each, perhaps, one or two New Testament books, which were eagerly obtained by the poor who could purchase no more.

The spread of light troubled those who upheld darkness. Strenuous efforts were made to suppress the Scriptures in English, and thus to keep down the Reformation in England, by the same policy as once had been used by Diocletian.

In 1408 Archbishop Arundel issued his famous constitution, condemnatory of all who should possess the Scriptures in English, in a translation made in or since the days of John Wycliffe. This same Archbishop was the first papal persecutor in our land, who took the lives of the servants of Christ. From the time of this constitution many suffered simply for the possession of a book of Scripture: they were burned with the Scripture tied to their necks. What a testimony for them and against their oppressors!

Others were punished in various ways. In the town of Burford, in Oxfordshire, there stands a market cross, memorable in the days of the Lollards. By that cross not a few were placed one by one, and after their necks had been bound by a napkin to the stone shaft, they were branded on the cheek with a hot iron. This was often done in the latter days of Lollardism, just before the Reformation was about to shine forth.

And this was for no crime save the possession of Scripture. I have stood by that cross and meditated on these things. It tells, indeed,

> "A tale what *England* once hath borne, what England yet *might* bear."

But the providence of God was designing a wider diffusion of the Scriptures in our land. William Tyndale (whom old Foxe terms "the Apostle of England in these our later times") gave forth the New Testament, *in print*, and that not rendered from the Latin, but from the original Greek.

The invention of printing, and the spread of Greek learning, effected many changes. Erasmus sojourned at Cambridge, and taught Greek, while Tyndale had removed thither from Magdalen Hall, Oxford. A few years later, a greater service was rendered by Erasmus, when in 1516 he gave forth, at Basle, the first edition of the Greek New Testament that ever was published in print. Much as we may lament the many weaknesses of Erasmus, let us be thankful for his great services! A year or two after, this Greek Testament found its way to Cambridge, and it was there *studied* to some purpose; so that while the Reformation in Germany was progressing, there was an opposition to Romanism aroused at Cambridge through the study of Scripture. This extended itself there so much, that it was said that every one of Gonville Hall (now better known as Caius College)

"smelt of the gridiron"; that is, as if he ought to be burned as a heretic. William Tyndale left England, and soon sent to his native land his translated New Testament. The Romish authorities sought to exclude the light by collecting and burning all the copies;—and they seemed to have been *almost* successful. God, however, had other purposes. Tyndale went on with his work of translation;—but before much of the Old Testament had been printed, he was seized, and condemned to lay down his life as a martyr for Christ.

Miles Coverdale (bishop of Exeter in the reign of Edward VI.) took up the work in good earnest. He tells us that he was urged on to it at Tyndale's arrest in the latter part of 1534:* and laboriously must he

* Coverdale says two things;—1st (in 1535), that he took up the work on Tyndale's arrest (November 1534);—and, 2nd (in the preface to his reprinted Bible, 1550), that he began his translation, "anno 1534." Some modern writers, who profess to know a great deal about the history of the English Bible, have had the temerity to say that those who assert this are guilty of gross extravagance. It would be well if such writers would acquaint themselves with *Coverdale's own* statements. Some choose to decry Coverdale's version as much as possible, affirming that he did not translate the Old Testament from the Hebrew: it is certain that he used all critical aids in his power, and that he worked with intense speed; but if those who decry his version *were better acquainted with it*, they would learn that it is based on the Hebrew, and that even the Hebrew edition which he used can be pointed out.

have toiled—for, on the 4th of October, 1535, the translated and printed volume of the entire holy Scripture was completed. There were yet many storms before England had the unhindered use of the word of God; but from the day of the accession of Queen Elizabeth, November 17, 1558, there has not been, in this land, any restriction on the use of holy Scripture in our tongue. Well might the 17th of November be kept, as long it was, as a kind of national holyday!

ROME AS A KEEPER OF HOLY WRIT.

Our reformers, as I have already remarked, stated the Church to be a *keeper* of holy Writ. The Church of Rome has shown herself to be so in a peculiar sense. She has made herself such a *keeper*, as if the Scripture had been a criminal, or a dangerous lunatic. She has kept it away from the people.

I referred just now to MSS., as the principal channels through which Scripture has come down to us. Of the MSS., the most ancient and important is one preserved in Rome, in the Vatican library. The value of ancient MSS. is great; for it is by comparing them that we are able to correct the text, so as to make it the more exactly represent the work as originally written. I do not mean to say that the common text is not tolerably accurate; but still the more precious a work is, the more ought we to desire to possess its read-

ings as correctly as possible. To collate this Vatican MS. was the object which led me to Rome six years ago. I took with me such introductions as seemed most fitting to accomplish the end I had in view:—but no!—no facility could be afforded for anything that aided to edit the text of Scripture; and I could only meet with promises and delays,—promises which came to nothing, and delays of a most wearying kind. Cardinal Lambruschini, then at the head of affairs, and holding the office of "Apostolic Librarian," as well as that of Secretary of State, gave me permission to collate the MS.; and yet difficulties were thrown in my way at the library:—Monsignor Laureani, the *primo custodè*, acted on the secret orders that he had received, and took no notice of the apparent permission that had been given. I obtained an interview with the late Pope (not, however, senselessly kissing the embroidered cross on his slipper), and he, in word, graciously gave me permission; but he referred me to Mgr. Laureani, who was already my hindrance. And thus, after five months of weary waiting, I left Rome without accomplishing my object. It is true that I often *saw* the MS., but they would not allow me to use it; and they would not let me open it without searching my pockets and depriving me of pen, ink, and paper; and at the same time two *prelati* kept me in constant conversation in Latin, and if I looked at a passage too long, they would snatch the book out of my hand. So foolishly and

meaninglessly did the papal authorities seek to keep this precious MS. to themselves.

All the circumstances of the transmission of Scripture to us *in our tongue*, show how Rome has *kept it back* from us as much as possible; and this is what she *still does* in countries where she has sway, and this she would do here if she could.

By the system of the confessional, the priests of Rome find out *who* possess the Scriptures in their own tongue, and these are made to endure persecutions like to those of Diocletian. That Rome continues her hostility to Scripture, witness the persecutions *now* being carried on in Tuscany—where every family tie is broken to obtain accusations;—witness the encyclical letter of the present Pope, and the public burning of Bibles in the square of the Capitol under his predecessor. But why need I turn to things in distant lands, when the spirit of Rome showed itself in this very town, and in this very year, by the endeavour which the popish priesthood made to prevent Christian ladies from reading the English Bible to emigrants? And on what ground could they object to this? Why, forsooth, because there might be Romanists present, *and we must respect their consciences.* As well might we be forbidden to preach the Gospel of Christ in our churches and chapels, because it scandalises Romish consciences:—no Romanist is present except from free choice, and that is enough.

But why do not the Romanists respect *our* consciences? They are unrestricted here as to their worship, —why do they impose restrictions on us when abroad? They seem to think it a wondrous stretch of liberality that they allow an English church outside the walls of Rome. But this, after all, is only a kind of loft of no very desirable description; and the contempt implied in its being outside the walls is not little. But do they interfere with what is done there? Do they respect conscience? About seven years ago, Dean Murray, of Ardagh in Ireland (who was known in this town to many, eleven years ago), was at Rome: he preached in the English church, but in the third sermon he used the word "transubstantiation"; that was enough,— notice was sent that if Dean Murray preached there again, the place would be closed by the authorities. This was the account which Roman Catholics gave me of the affair. So much for respect paid to conscience.

And yet at Rome they endeavour to mystify the subject, as though it were not true that the ecclesiastical authorities wish to keep minds in ignorance. They tell strangers that *their* Sunday schools are so admirably attended, that there is no European capital in which such a proportion of the young receive primary instruction; and they point to large placards on the walls, announcing the Scriptures in Italian for sale. All this seems very plausible, and many are deceived by it.

But let us look a little below the surface. You may go into one of these parish schools on a Sunday afternoon: you find a large number of children congregated in a side chapel, and you see a priest pacing up and down, to listen if all goes on properly. Some inquirers are content with this, and they go away reporting that they heard the children diligently occupied with their lessons under the active and vigilant superintendence of a priest devoted to his work. But this investigation is not enough: you must enter the chapel itself (I have often done this), and there you see no books or lessons whatever. You see a sharp-looking girl, with a shrill voice and commanding manner, who acts as a sort of monitress, and after her the younger children repeat a great deal by rote. In short, the "primary instruction," of which so much is said, does *not* include learning to read. Then what does it include? is what you may well ask. *I* never found them occupied with anything but *Litanies* addressed to the Virgin Mary.

But still, if the Scriptures in Italian are publicly announced for sale at Rome,* is it not a calumny to say that they withhold the Bible from the people?

* The Roman Catholic bishop, Milner, tells us: "Vulgar translations of the whole Scripture are upon sale, and open to every one, in Italy itself, with the express approbation of the Roman Pontiff."—(*End of Religious Controversy*, Letter xlvii. p. 342, 5th ed. 1824.)

English visitors often asked me this. Have you read the placard *through?* was my reply. Now, they begin with setting forth the importance of the edition of the Italian Bible; then they say that this translation is that of Mgr. Martini, archbishop of Florence, in which everything is rendered in entire conformity with the doctrines of Holy Church, as defined by the Council of Trent. (The mode in which this is done in Martini's translation is by altering a text here and there, so that, without making a general change, there is authority inserted for every one of the peculiar dogmas of Rome.*) The placard continues to say, that all is explained by notes taken from approved Catholic writers. And yet one might say, in spite of all this, a great deal of Scripture is opened to the eyes of the Roman people. It may seem so; but, however, the notice continues to inform us, that all discreet Catholics may purchase, who have the permission of their confessors, and who will read under their direction; this of course would make the permission nugatory, and so also would the *price*,—

* This is the common plan in *all* the Romish versions: they are such that Protestants cannot circulate them as being the pure word of God. The passages which speak of the *finished sacrifice* of Christ receive a colouring wholly different. Thus, in the Roman Catholic English version we find, in Heb. x. 12, "But this man *offering* one sacrifice for sins, for ever *sitteth* on the right hand of God:" and in ch. i. 3, "making purgation of sins, sitteth," etc. What perversions!

for that is about twenty Roman crowns, or more than four guineas: *this* alone is a mockery when addressed to a population in abject poverty. I never *saw* a copy of this edition of the Bible; for although they did not ask an Englishman for the written permission of a confessor, yet they refused to produce a copy unless I promised to purchase.*

ROME AS A WITNESS OF HOLY WRIT.

Thus is Rome a keeper of holy Writ, in the sense of *keeping it back* from the eyes of men. But I say further, that as a witness of holy Writ she has become a false witness. She allows things to go forth in which Scripture words are perverted to false uses. For instance, in the church of Sta. Maria Maggiore, at *Florence*,† I saw over the altar of St. Joseph, the text "ITE AD JOSEPHUM, Gen. xli. 55," "*Go unto Joseph!*" thus applying the words of Pharaoh to the Egyptians to the honours which they pay to Joseph, the husband of Mary, whom they style the patron of the dying, possessed (they affirm) of the singular privilege, that

* It was in the winter of 1845–6 that I made diligent inquiries for a copy of this version of the Bible in Italian, so ostentatiously advertised at Rome. I cannot find, however, that in the following year even the placards were exhibited at all.

† This is a small church in the Via dei Cerretani, bearing the same name as the well-known Basilica on the Esquiline at Rome.

no one who is devoted to him shall fail of having a happy death. This awful perversion of Scripture is not confined to Italy, for I saw in London, a few months ago, in a Roman Catholic book-shop, a picture of St. Joseph, with a statement of the powers with which they invest him, and below this same text in French, "*Allez à Joseph.*"

At Rome, near the Vatican, stands the church of "Our Lady, the mother of grace." In the porch is this inscription, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of MARY, that we may obtain mercy." I asked, "How dare you thus alter and pervert the Scripture?" "Oh!" the answer was, "this is no perversion: it is only putting our Lady's name instead of the word that describes her: our Lord said to our Lady, No grace shall flow forth to any one except *through thee.*"

These are but specimens of the perverted use which Rome makes of fragments of Scripture to support her delusions; and how are the people, without Bibles, to detect the imposture?

A maid-servant at Rome said to an English lady, who told her of the falsehood and folly of some legend about the Virgin Mary, "But what can we do? we must believe what we are told, or else believe nothing. We are not allowed to have books that would teach us." Indeed, the Bible is to many of them a mysterious book. An English lady, travelling in Tuscany, after reading her Bible, gave it to the chambermaid to pack

up with her other things. The young woman asked what book it was; "La parola di Dio," was the answer. This drew forth an expression of astonishment, "La parola di Dio! è che dice?" Happily for us, *we* have no occasion to ask, *What does the word of God say?* we have to seek teachable spirits, that we may listen to its instruction.

Where Scripture is thus withheld, what a state of uncertainty must rest on every mind as to what God has taught, and what He has not! I may illustrate this:—I was once on a jury, when the counsel for one of the parties, with a most unaccountable misapprehension, told us that it was a very plain case, for the words of a certain Act of Parliament were, "It shall be lawful": the judge quietly corrected the statement, which only led to the counsel twice repeating the assertion. The judge handed us the Act of Parliament, saying, "Gentlemen, this is a question of *fact*, and therefore wholly within *your* province; you can see whether the word *not* is in the sentence." We read the clause, "It shall NOT be lawful," and thus saw that the counsel (from whatever cause) was misleading us. Had we not been able to refer to the Act, I am sure that some of the jury would have credited the strenuous assertions of the counsel more than the correction of the judge. This would be our condition, had we not the Scripture open before us: how could we know whom we ought to believe as to the truth of God?

USES OF SUCH INVESTIGATION.

It might seem to some, as if an investigation of the historic evidence of the authorship of the New Testament, would be of but little value in aiding our spiritual intelligence of its contents. This is not its *direct* object. We may be well satisfied with the proportions and aptitude of an edifice, without having thought much on the subject of its foundations. But if any question were raised as to its stability, we should then wish to be satisfied as to its foundations; though such an inquiry would not make it more commodious than before.

But such investigations have a yet further use: they serve to connect the practical application of Scripture, in all its force, with the manner in which it was first given forth. A partially instructed eye may gaze on the starry heavens, and may learn something of the motions of the planets: but when he sees an astronomer in his study busily engaged with mathematical demonstrations, he may ask what connection geometrical elements, and algebraic formulæ, can have with the heavenly orbs above us. And yet every instructed mind must know, that it is by mathematical science alone that we possess that exactitude of astronomical knowledge, which can enable any one to calculate the orbit of even the most distant of the planets. It was thus that the existence of the newly-found planet

Neptune, was traced: mathematical science showed that there must be a body affecting the course in which the planet Herschell would otherwise have moved. Thus there was a close and intimate connection between the early mathematical studies of John Adams, (studies which connected him with this neighbourhood, and, as to his *instructor*, with this place), and the greatest astronomical discovery of this century. He informed me, in speaking of his education, that *even then* it was its application to astronomy that gave him the interest which he felt in mathematics. Whatever is learned fundamentally, admits of wide and extensive application.

This historic investigation is equally opposed to Rome and Rationalism.

To the claims of Rome, we may say, we possess the word of God, given forth by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost (as she owns), which has been transmitted to us from the days of the Apostles; and this Scripture, instead of leading us to blind and superstitious belief in whatever Church authorities present, instructs us in the grounds of our salvation through faith in the blood of Christ. It is remarkable how, in conducting this inquiry, every point of evidence supplied fresh testimony against Rome. To that *unhappy* Church one may, indeed, apply in another sense the words of Tertullian, "Let us see what it learned,—what it teaches"; it was taught that "whatsoever things were

written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the *Scriptures* might have hope"—(Rom. xv. 4). And again, it was told of the revelation of the mystery now "made manifest, and by *the Scriptures of the prophets*, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith"—(xvi. 26). Alas! instead of teaching this, Rome withholds the word of God, and persecutes those who read it. She forbids that "hope" which arises from the comfort of the Scriptures.

Definite grounds of testimony are equally opposed to the growing evil of rationalism under its various forms. Some seek to meet this evil by the claims of Church authority:—let them rather be met by the authority of God in His word. Whatever would cast doubt or uncertainty upon Scripture, is answered by the distinct evidence which carries us back to the age of the Apostles. We may thus hold forth the New Testament, maintaining its claims, and denying that there are any grounds, in fact, for representing its origin as involved in any uncertainty at all. And when a rejection of the claims of Scripture is represented as an indication of mental superiority, we need not be surprised—for the New Testament has told us that "there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep,

all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old," etc. It is this *willing* ignorance that leads minds astray, and of this we have been forewarned: "Seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." The Scripture has thus, here, and in other places, as in the 2nd Epistle to Timothy, and in that of Jude, warned us fully of the increasing evil of the last days,—a solemn truth, which ought to put us on our guard against those rationalistic thoughts which exalt man, and depreciate or cast doubt upon the Scripture of God.

In conclusion, let me ask you not to be surprised if difficulties, as to portions of Scripture, are brought before you, such as you may not be prepared to answer. No difficulty connected with a proved fact can invalidate the fact itself. Objectors are pertinacious in repeating the same cavils. Well did Bishop Horne say, "Pertness and ignorance may ask a question in three lines, which it will cost learning and ingenuity thirty pages to answer; and when this is done, the same question shall be triumphantly asked again the next year, as if nothing had ever been written on the subject." God has unfolded before you two books,—the book of Creation and the book of Revela-

tion. In creation you see testimony to the Creator, so that those who learn not His eternal power and Godhead, as witnessed by the things that are made, are without excuse. Many difficulties might be raised as to points in which *we* do not see the wisdom and goodness of God; but these things do not shake our confidence in the testimony borne by the book of Creation. So, too, as to the book of Revelation: seeming difficulties cannot invalidate its authority; they should only teach us how finite are our minds, and lead us the more with patience and humility to seek the instruction of the Holy Spirit of God, who can cause all seeming difficulties to vanish. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."—(Hos. xiv. 9).



